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NSC chief: Colonel didn't violate contra ban

Put case 'to rest,'
he tells Congress

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WASHINGTON — The White House "strongly opposes" legislation that would force it to give Congress documents on the secret connections of a National Security Council staffer with the contras, National Security Adviser Vice Adm. John Poindexter said Wednesday.

In letters to the chairmen of the House committees on Foreign Affairs, Intelligence and Armed Services, Poindexter repeated administration assertions that Marine Lt. Col. Oliver North's dealings with the contras did not violate "the spirit and letter" of a congressional prohibition on U.S. involvement with the rebels.

Poindexter also contended that his predecessor, Robert McFarlane, had given Congress information on North's activities last year and there was no need to reopen the case.

"I... sincerely hope this matter can finally be put to rest," Poindexter said in the administration's first formal response to congressional demands.

But the chairman of the House Intelligence Committee, Rep. Lee Hamilton, D-Ind., said Poindexter's letter is not enough and he won't let the matter drop.

"There should be additional response from the White House," Hamilton said. For example, North should come to Capitol Hill to answer questions, he said.

Congressional requests for information on North were prompted by a resolution of inquiry introduced on June 24 by Rep. Ronald Coleman, D-Texas.

The resolution, which was referred to the three House committees for action, asks Reagan to provide all documents, records and information concerning North and the contras since July 1983.

Specifically, the resolution requests records on whether North provided the rebels with tactical or strategic military advice or helped them procure weapons and funds.

North has steadfastly refused comment on the accusations.

Last fall, McFarlane met with members of the House and Senate Intelligence committees and assured them that North had had only "isolated" contacts with contra leaders and never provided them with military advice, weapons or funds.

McFarlane also said that North's role with the contras was mainly political, as a coordinator of White House efforts to persuade Congress to lift the ban on assisting the rebels.

Last week, a senior administration official said that North will be reassigned to noncontra duties after Reagan signs a \$100 million aid package to the rebels. That could occur early next month.